

Psychologically Speaking (Academic Problems: Blame Time)

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Come Fall and the blame game begins again. For that is when the parents and teachers of children who are doing poorly in school blame first the child and then each other, all insisting that *something* be done. Or a vague descriptive term is applied (ADD/Attention-Deficit Disorder; HD/Hyperactivity Disorder; LD/Learning Disorder) which seems to mutate regularly. Blame may even be placed, as Bill Cosby did, on the (Black) child's over-involvement in media or general parental neglect. But children are individuals and the reasons for school failure can range from those relatively simple to remedy (poor teaching; temporary family stress) to others which are complex, begin far earlier, and are more difficult to remedy.

Within the first three years of a child's life certain crucial psychological mechanisms must develop. These enable a child (and later the adult) to distinguish reality from fantasy, develop a sense of who they are, and control their thinking and behavior. Inadequate developmental experiences can cause weakness of one or more of these abilities and reduce the later ability to learn. Individual psychotherapy is then needed to *replace* the deficient psychological mechanisms with more mature ones, as, to enable a child to develop better control over their thinking and behavior so they can

concentrate better.

The motivation to learn is innate and requires no external reward for it generates its own: *effectance motivation*, or the good feeling which a child *naturally* experiences when they are fully using their abilities.

While the goal of all parents, teachers, and Bill Cosby is identical--to produce a well-functioning student and adult--the reason why a child can't learn often lies far earlier in their past than is commonly recognized.

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